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California State Senate

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PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
SIXTH SENATE DISTRICT

STANDING COMMITTEES:
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PUBLIC SAFETY



January 16, 2013

The Honorable Joseph Biden
Vice President of the United States of America
The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20501

Re: A Framework for Investment in Mental Health Services (a \$10 billion start)

Dear Mr. Vice President:

In December of last year, I wrote to you urging that you consider an expanded federal role in supporting mental health programs and initiatives similar to California's Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63 approved by voters in 2004). I was pleased to hear reports that the proposal your Task Force is presenting to President Barack Obama will include discussion of mental health. As your administration and the Congress begin work on the President's plan, I wanted to provide additional details on the proposal I urged you to consider.

Our nation cannot be healthy without positive mental health. Every year, more than one in four U.S. adults suffers some form of mental illness or substance abuse. That includes familiar diagnoses like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, post-natal depression, and ADHD.

Discrimination and stigma surrounding mental illness, coupled with a lack of prevention and early intervention services, can lead to a range of negative outcomes for those suffering from mental disorders; dropping out of school, loss of employment, increased risk of incarceration, and potentially becoming a danger to one's self or others through violent acts in those rare yet overwhelmingly tragic situations. We know these statistics all too well.

A unique opportunity exists for the federal government to assertively infuse the efforts of states such as California, and to bolster the effectiveness of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), by offering a more comprehensive federal partnership for mental health and substance use disorder services. An estimated 32 million uninsured Americans are anticipated to obtain coverage under the ACA and six to 10 million of them will have untreated mental illness or addiction.

We have many evidence-based practices and approaches that we know are effective. Prevention, early treatment, and recovery support services need to be woven into our communities to improve our collective and individual health status and to lower future costs in both human capital and dollars.

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Successful implementation of the ACA is dependent on fuller access to mental health services and addiction treatment.

Such a commitment could reduce human suffering, facilitate integration of mental health and substance use disorder services with medical care to treat the whole person, and considerably reduce the trends of future health, human services, and corrections expenditures.

I offer a \$10 billion framework for investment in mental health services focusing on three key areas:

1. ***Prevention and Early Intervention (\$1.2 billion)***. Implement local Prevention and Early Intervention projects in our diverse communities to inform people about early warning signs and how they can connect to effective, timely help.
2. ***Fund School-Based Health Center Services (\$800 million)***. Bolster the services provided through the 1,900 School-Based Health Centers to facilitate access to mental health services.
3. ***Treat the Whole Person: What Ever it Takes (\$8 billion)***. Support a fuller continuum of services for people with severe mental illness as is done in California through the "Full Service Partnerships" implemented as a key cornerstone of the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63 approved by voters in 2004).

These proposals are grounded in principles and approaches proven in their effectiveness. The attached document lays out a strong framework and provides concrete examples of application in our California communities. These same approaches can be applied with success in every state throughout the nation.

Mental health services have been under funded from the start due to stigma, discrimination and the historical lack of effective treatment models. Now is the time for a federal investment specifically focused on mental health and addiction treatment services and supports.

Our communities across the nation - whether urban or rural, whether coastal or inland - need a fuller integration of mental health and addiction treatment services and supports in order for us to heal and to move forward as a productive nation.

Sincerely,



DARRELL STEINBERG
President pro Tempore
Sixth Senate District